



FEW FESTIVITIES—Joe Farnsworth, manager of the J.C. Penney store in downtown Camas, announces that the store will close on Jan. 28. It has been open in downtown Camas since 1925, and Farnsworth has been manager for the past 11 years. He is awaiting news of a re-assignment. Company officials say competition from shopping malls killed the Camas store. Farnsworth credits his staff with keeping the store running longer than many expected.

Manager eyes future

1960

Penney store closing

By PATRICK WEBB

J.C. Penney is closing its Camas store.

Manager Joe Farnsworth said the store will close on Jan. 28.

The decision was made because of the declining profitability of the store, said G.C. Lund, district manager for J.C. Penney.

Farnsworth said the "countdown" had already begun and special promotions will take place for seasonal items.

The store has been in Camas since 1925 and employs three full-time and three part-time staff. Farnsworth said the company is making efforts to relocate them at other stores.

Lund said increasing business at Portland-Vancouver area shopping malls detracted from the Camas store's profitability.

Farnsworth echoed this, adding that the hard work of his employees kept the Camas store alive longer than some predicted after the opening of the Vancouver Mall branch.

He said the downtown Vancouver Penney's store was closed within 1½ years of VanMall Penney's opening. "We were being watched to see our performance," he said.

"We lasted a lot longer than some felt we would. We have had a good set of employees and that's what has made a good store."

The store at 304 NE 4th Avenue had been profitable, said Farnsworth.

"The banner years for the Camas store were before the freeway was opened between Camas and Vancouver.

"The opening of the freeway had a very negative impact. Everything that has been added since then has taken a little bit away from the store."

Farnsworth said the opening of VanMall and its giant J.C. Penney store were significant factors contributing to Camas' decline.

"It's very easy for people to travel and they have the maximum amount of shopping choices. So they have a tendency to want to shop there," he said.

Farnsworth has been manager at the Camas store for 11 years and is approaching 25 years with the company. He previously worked at Longview and Aberdeen.

He is waiting for store executives to discuss his future, which may be at another store in the Western states.

"I'm quite reluctant to leave the area," said Farnsworth who has two

children in the Washougal schools.

He said he enjoys the small-town atmosphere in the community and especially his involvement with the Camas-Washougal Chamber of Commerce.

He was among those who pioneered Camas Days and as chamber president last year helped to make the chamber financially secure while attracting a "society editor's dream" list of guest speakers.

These included Sen. Scoop Jackson, Gov. John Spellman, Congressman Don Bonker, Bill Creson, president of Crown Zellerbach and all the area lawmakers.

"Things fell together fairly well for us," said Farnsworth. "Probably getting the chamber out of the red and into the black was one of the best things. From Senator Jackson down we had a good year."

Farnsworth said his colleagues at work have considerably added to his enjoyment of doing business in Camas.

They are Ramona Wilson, Marge Lehn, Dorothy O'Dell, Norma Linn and Cres Leszczynski.

"It's been my pleasure to have a good crew," said Farnsworth.